

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /062 W

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O R 021000Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3951

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA

CINCPAC HONOLULU

AMCONSUL FUKUOKA

AMCONSUL NAHA

AMCONSUL OSAKA

AMCONSUL SAPPORO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 17764

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJECT: LOWER HOUSE ELECTION IN HOME STRETCH

SUMMARY. RECENT ROUND OF MEDIA PREDICTIONS, BASED ON NATIONWIDE  
POLLS, UNIVERSALLY SUGGESTS THAT LDP WILL NOT ACHIEVE 271 SEAT  
TARGET SET BY PRIMIN IN NEXT SUNDAY'S ELECTION. PREDICTIONS VARY  
WIDELY ON LDP AND JSP RESULTS, BUT ARE AGREED THAT CGP WILL  
SHOW SUBSTANTIAL GAINS AND DSP AND YOHEI KONO'S NEW LIBERAL CLUB  
WILL GROW SLIGHTLY WITH JCP DECLINING SOMEWHAT. MEDIA ALSO  
PREDICTS ELECTION OF LARGE NUMBER OF INDEPENDENTS. OUR OWN  
ANALYSIS SUGGESTS THAT LDP SHOULD GAIN SOME 264 SEATS, PLUS OR  
MINUS THREE OR FOUR, WHICH WOULD MEAN, WITH THE AFFILIATION OF  
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CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENTS, THE MAINTENANCE OF EFFECTIVE

MAJORITY IN LOWER HOUSE. AS MIKI HAS SET GOAL FOR OFFICIAL LDP CANDIDATES AT 271, RESULT IN THIS RANGE WOULD MOST PROBABLY INDICATE HIS REPLACEMENT; FUKUDA IS STILL LEADING CANDIDATE. WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE THAT ELECTION RESULT WILL HAVE SIGNIFICANT NEAR-TERM IMPACT ON GOJ POLICIES OF INTEREST TO US, ALTHOUGH IT WILL BE MARGINALLY MORE DIFFICULT FOR GOJ TO EXERCISE NEW INITIATIVES. REGARDLESS OF WHO EMERGES VICTORIOUS FROM LDP LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE, IT WILL BE A LEADER KEENLY AWARE OF IMPORTANCE OF US-JAPAN RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. AS THIRTEENTH POSTWAR ELECTION FOR 511 LOWER HOUSE SEATS ENTERS HOME STRETCH, MEDIA POLLS UNIVERSALLY SUGGEST THAT CANDIDATES WITH OFFICIAL LDP ENDORSEMENT WILL NOT OBTAIN 271 SEATS WHICH PRIMIN MIKI SET AS GOAL AT OUTSET OF CAMPAIGN. SAME POLLS ALSO SUGGEST, HOWEVER, THAT LDP CANDIDATES WILL GAIN A MAJORITY (256) AND, WHEN WINNING CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENTS AND YOHEI KONO'S NEW LIBERAL CLUB (NLC) CANDIDATES ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, FINAL RESULT WILL MEAN LITTLE CHANGE IN OVERALL CONSERVATIVE STRENGTH IN HOUSE.

2. MEDIA PREDICTIONS, BASED ON PUBLIC OPINION POLLS CONDUCTED OVER ONE WEEK AGO PLUS ANALYSIS OF EACH DISTRICT, VARY DRAMATICALLY IN ASSESSMENT OF LDP CHANCES. AT SAME TIME, POLLS ALSO INDICATE UNUSUALLY HIGH NUMBER OF VOTERS -- 30 PERCENT OR MORE -- ARE STILL UNDECIDED. DESPITE UNDECIDEDS, MEDIA PREDICTIONS RANGE FROM LOW OF 252 SEATS FOR LDP (YOMIURI) TO HIGH OF 265 (KYODO) -- VS. 271 AT LAST ELECTION. THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT JCP WILL LOSE SEVERAL SEATS, DROPPING FROM 39 TO 32-38 RANGE; THAT CLEAN GOVERNMENT PARTY (CGP) WILL GAIN 8-14 FROM 30; AND DSP WILL GAIN 3-8 SEATS FROM 19. RANGE FOR JSP IS EVEN BROADER -- 115 (ASAHI) TO 137 (MAINICH) -- VS. 118 IN 1972.

3. OUR ANALYSIS SHOWS THAT ACTUAL RESULTS OF ELECTION WILL TURN ON SOME THIRTY TO FORTY CONTESTS, SOME OF WHICH CONSERVATIVES AND CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENTS STAND A CHANCE OF WINNING AND IN WHICH LDP, ALARMED BY POLL RESULTS, IS EXPECTED TO MAKE FRANTIC LAST DITCH EFFORT FOR WHICH, WE ARE INFORMED, IT HAS AMPLY FUNDS. THOUGH CRISIS ATMOSPHERE MAY HELP, OFFICIAL LDP CANDIDATES STAND ONLY A SLIM CHANCE OF REACHING 271 GOAL SET BY PRIMIN MIKI. ON BASIS OF REPORTING FROM CONSULATES AND WIDE RANGE

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OF CONVERSATIONS IN PAST SEVERAL DAYS, OUR OWN ESTIMATE IS THAT FOLLOWING POST-ELECTION LINEUP IS WITHIN REALM OF PROBABILITY, PLUS OR MINUS 3-4: LDP 264; JSP 120; CGP 42; JCP 36; DSP 22; NLC 11; AND INDEPENDENTS 16 (INCLUDING 2 JCP AFFILIATES, 1 CGP, 1 PROGRESSIVE INDEPENDENT, AND 12 CONSERVATIVES, ALL BUT TWO OF WHOM -- TANAKA AND HASHIMOTO -- ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW TRADITIONAL PATTERN OF JOINING LDP AFTER ELECTION.)

4. WHY DO POLLS SHOW SUCH A DRAMATIC DECLINE IN LDP PROSPECTS?  
AT OUTSET OF ELECTION CAMPAIGN, THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT  
WITHIN LDP LEADERSHIP THAT PARTY'S OFFICIAL CANDIDATES COULD  
EASILY GAIN MORE THAN 270 SEATS AND THAT MIKI-FUKUDA STRUGGLE  
FOR PARTY LEADERSHIP WOULD HAVE LITTLE EFFECT ON OUTCOME. POLLS  
INDICATE THAT SUCH OPTIMISM WAS UNFOUNDED, HOWEVER, AND WE  
BELIEVE REVERSAL OF OFFICIAL LDP CANDIDATES' PROSPECTS IS DUE  
TO FOLLOWING FACTORS:

--WHILE OPPOSITION HAS BEEN UNABLE TO MAKE LOCKHEED SCANDAL AS  
DECISIVE AN ISSUE AS IT HAD HOPED, MEDIA HAS KEPT IT ALIVE AND  
IT HAS AROUSED DISSATISFACTION AMONG URBAN CONSERVATIVE VOTERS  
WHO ARE NOW LOOKING FOR ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVES SUCH AS NLC,  
INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES AND POSSIBLY THE DSP. SCANDAL HAS ALSO  
DETERRED SOME CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENTS FROM SEEKING LDP LABEL  
AS THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE ATTEMPTED.

--EMERGENCE OF NLC. UNANTICIPATED SUCCESS OF NL WITH ITS  
PROGRESSIVE/MODERN IMAGE HAS APPARENTLY CUT DEEPLY INTO TRADI-  
TIONAL CONSERVATIVE VOTE, PERHAPS ACCOUNTING FOR AS MUCH AS 2  
PERCENT OF MEDIA'S ANTICIPATED 4 PERCENT DECLINE IN LDP POPULAR  
VOTE. NLC EMERGENCE HAS ALSO MADE IT APPARENT THAT LDP HAS RUN  
TOO MANY CANDIDATES IN SOME OF JAPAN'S 3-5 SEAT CONSTITUENCIES  
WHERE THERE IS INSUFFICIENT CONSERVATIVE BASE.

--LDP LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE. ANTI-MIKI FORCES' AND BUREAUCRACY'S  
DESIRE TO AVOID CONTRIBUTING TO MIKI VICTORY HAS EFFECTIVELY  
PREVENTED LDP FROM COMING OUT WITH DRAMATIC VOTE-GETTING ELECTION  
PROMISES SUCH AS PERSONAL INCOME TAX CUT, IMAGINATIVE AND  
EFFECTIVE ACTION ON INFLATION AND STALLED ECONOMIC RECOVERY. ON  
CONTRARY, STATEMENTS BY LDP LEADERS HAVE FOCUSSED ON LEADERSHIP  
STRUGGLE RATHER THAN ON BREAD-AND-BUTTER ISSUES, THUS CONFUSING  
PARTY WORKERS WHO ARE EXPECTED TO GET OUT VOTE.  
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5. ANTICIPATED DECREASE IN COMMUNIST STRENGTH IS PARTLY DUE TO EXPECTED RECOVERY OF CGP TO PRE-1972 LEVEL, BASED ON STRENGTH OF PARENT ORGANIZATION, SOKA GAKKAI. IT IS ALSO DUE TO PROSPECT THAT NLC WILL DRAW HEAVILY ON "FLOATING VOTE" THAT WENT TO JCP IN SOME AREAS IN 1972.

6. ELECTION WILL NOT SUBSTANTIALLY EFFECT FACTIONAL BALANCE WITHIN LDP AND EVEN WITH PROSPECTIVE REDUCED MARGIN IT SHOULD, WITH EXPECTED POST-ELECTION AFFILIATION OF CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENTS, BE ABLE TO OBTAIN AN EFFECTIVE MAJORITY. ELECTION RESULTS WILL HAVE A DECISIVE IMPACT ON LDP LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE, HOWEVER, AND LONGER TERM PROSPECTS FOR CONSERVATIVES. FOLLOWING IS OUR ANALYSIS OF THREE POSSIBLE ELECTION OUTCOMES AND CONFIDENTIAL

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IMPACT EACH WOULD HAVE ON CONSERVATIVE RULE AND LDP POWER STRUGGLE.

A. OFFICIAL LDP CANDIDATES WIN 271 -- AN EFFECTIVE MAJORITY -- OR MORE SEATS. LDP ABILITY TO ORGANIZE HOUSE ALONE ASSURED. EVERY LDP SEAT IN EXCESS OF 271 WOULD STRENGTHEN MIKI'S CLAIM TO MANDATE. ANTI-MIKI FORCES WOULD, NEVERTHELESS, ARGUE STRONGLY THAT SUCH "VICTORY" WAS MANDATE FOR LDP, NOT FOR MIKI, AND

SEEK TO TOPPLE HIM. ALTHOUGH A MIKI RESIGNATION IS CONCEIVABLE, MOST OBSERVERS EXPECT HIM TO WAGE A BITTER STRUGGLE TO REMAIN IN OFFICE, INCLUDING USE OF THREAT TO BOLT PARTY. PROLONGED AND MESSY BATTLE FOR SUCCESSION WOULD ENSUE.

B. OFFICIAL LDP CANDIDATES WIN BETWEEN 260 AND 270 SEATS. WITH INCLUSION OF CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENTS, MOST OF WHOM WILL AFFILIATE WITH LDP AFTER ELECTION, LDP WOULD BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN WORKING MAJORITY. MIKI HAS STATED SEVERAL TIMES, HOWEVER, THAT A WIN OF 271 SEATS WOULD CONSTITUTE A MANDATE FOR HIS REMAINING IN OFFICE; A FAILURE TO GAIN THAT NUMBER WOULD IMMEDIATELY RESULT IN DEMANDS FOR HIS RESIGNATION. IT IS PRESENTLY OPEN QUESTION WHETHER HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO STONEWALL, BUT MOST PROBABLY HE WOULD STEP DOWN. FUKUDA IS STILL LEADING CANDIDATE TO SUCCEED HIM, BUT MIKI COULD MAKE MAJOR EFFORT TO BLOCK FUKUDA SUCCESSION.

C. OFFICIAL LDP CANDIDATES FAIL TO WIN 260 SEATS. AFFILIATION OF CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENTS WOULD BECOME EVEN MORE PRESSING AND COOPERATION OF NLC COULD ALSO BE REQUIRED, NECESSITATING IN EFFECT A COALITION GOVERNMENT AND COMPLICATED BARGAINING THAT WOULD ENTAIL. CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT WOULD NEVERTHELESS BE ASSURED. MIKI WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE TO RESIGN, BUT SUCCESSION STRUGGLE COULD BECOME WIDE OPEN IF FUKUDA WERE FORCED TO SHARE SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR ELECTION DEBACLE FOR HIS ROLE IN SPLITTING PARTY LEADERSHIP AT CRUCIAL TIME. WITH MIKI OUT AND FUKUDA ALSO IN TROUBLE, POSSIBILITY OF THIRD CANDIDATE MIGHT EMERGE. LOWER HOUSE SPEAKER MAEO AND FORMER FONMIN MIYAZAWA ARE TWO POSSIBILITIES

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MENTIONED.

7. CONCLUSION. WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE THAT ELECTION RESULTS WILL HAVE SIGNIFICANT NEAR-TERM IMPACT ON GOJ POLICIES OF INTEREST TO US. BY EVEN MOST PESSIMISTIC CALCULATIONS, LDP, INDEPENDENT CONSERVATIVES, AND CONSERVATIVE NLC WILL EXERCISE EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF LOWER HOUSE, ALTHOUGH DEPENDING ON MARGINS, GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE TO BE MORE ACCOMMODATING TO OPPOSITION. BY SAME TOKEN, WHOEVER EMERGES VICTORIOUS IN LDP LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE WILL BE KEENLY AWARE OF IMPORTANCE OF US-JAPAN RELATIONS AND AN INDIVIDUAL WITH WHOM WE CAN CONTINUE OUR PRESENT CLOSE COOPERATION.

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## Message Attributes

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